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## **Dishing social media: Time to run the Instagram marathon - by Diana Podaski**

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Diana Podaski, Linear Retail Properties

As the first day of spring has finally arrived and many of our fellow Bostonians gear up for the infamous Boston Marathon, I can't help but apply the idea to social media and what medium has the longest running legs right now – Instagram. Though I dabble more with this network on a personal level vs. for business, I'm seeing more and more opportunity with Instagram and am realizing this is the new hottest space to be in.

Instagram, owned by Facebook and now boasting 600 million monthly active users, originated as a mobile photo editing and sharing App and has transformed over the last six years to a social media network utilized by marketers and all kinds of business owners. The App has evolved from its signature square photo to accepting all shapes of photos and now highlighting various forms of video.

The expanded video features have become some of Instagram's newest and best features. Originally only accepting up to 15 seconds of video, the App is now capable of up to one minute video along with a live video feature allowing up to one full hour. A unique and more fun video offering is "Boomerang," which records a video and boomerangs it back repeatedly. However, the most used new (as of August 2016) video feature is "Instagram Stories." As a way to compete with Snap (formally Snapchat), Instagram launched Stories to include disappearing video after 24 hours. So what makes Instagram attractive for business? It allows you to show what you do in a more creative way and reach audiences where they already spend most of their time. With tools that now allow you to post up to 10 pictures or videos in the same post, new product tagging that allows the user to buy products without leaving the App and ads and insights now available for Instagram Stories, there are nearly 26.2 ways to utilize the network to show off your brand.

Social Media Fun Fact: Instagram trends include #WCW (Women Crush Wednesdays) where you post a woman of inspiration on a Wednesday and #TBT (Throw Back Thursdays) where you post a picture from the past on a Thursday.

Diana Podaski is VP - marketing and social media at Linear Retail Properties, Burlington, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540